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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 KABUL 002467

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/FO DAS GASTRIGHT, SCA/A
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
NSC FOR HARRIMAN
OSD FOR SHIVERS
CENTCOM FOR CG CJTF-82 POLAD

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SUBJECT: PRT FARAH: DETERIORATION IN SECURITY, RISE IN
POPPY MARK PAST SIX MONTHS

Classified By: PolCouns Sara Rosenberry for reasons 1.4 (b) and 9d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Security in Farah Province deteriorated over the past six months. The Province now has its third ineffective governor since September 2006. The province continues to be plagued by high rates of kidnappings, robberies, and insurgent activity; weak and corrupt provincial and district governments; lack of development and employment; dependence on poppy; and an exodus of Afghans to Iran for work. Family and tribal feuds add to the general despair felt by the population. While USAID is expanding its program in the province, Farah still does not receive adequate attention from Kabul and international donors. END SUMMARY

SECURITY

¶2. (C) The security situation in Farah continues to deteriorate. UNAMA has again postponed plans to open an office there due to security concerns, including an increase in IED attacks and suicide bombers. The area near the intersection of the Ring Road and the Highway 517 spur road leading to Farah City is particularly vulnerable. Insurgent activity and crime -- including hijackings, killings, theft, and unauthorized toll collections -- have interfered with commercial and public traffic in that heavily traveled area. Although targeted, PRT convoys have been fortunate so far to escape serious harm. Five district chiefs of police and approximately 40 ANP and ANA soldiers have been killed in the past six months. The most insecure districts have experienced death and desertion at every level of the ANP and Afghan Auxiliary Police (ANAP). ISAF is increasing kinetic operations in Farah to counter rising numbers of insurgents reportedly traveling from Helmand, Kandahar, and other countries.

¶3. (C) With a weak and insufficiently supplied ANSF, insurgents and criminals continue to operate with impunity despite joint ANA-ANP-

ISAF/Coalition security operations. The ANP complains of equipment and manpower shortages. The ANA is only at partial kandak strength and depends on additional, not always forthcoming and always temporary, support from Herat. Formal Regional Training Center (RTC) training opportunities have decreased as RTC resources are focused on training Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP); the PMT has trained some ANP and ANAP. The Provincial Communications Center (PCC), set up to bring all ANSF elements together to coordinate security operations, moved to the ANP headquarters. Its information has become less timely and useful, but DynCorp mentors are now supporting the PCC. There continues to be a difference of opinion about which security forces are ANP or ANAP. Police at highway checkpoints have been deserting their posts (along with weapons and uniforms) to be replaced by a force, now reportedly ANP, led by a Bakwa mullah. Militias play a key role in Farah Province. A new Police Chief, Gen. Abdul Sarjang (former Paktia CoP), arrived in Farah June 28.

GOVERNANCE

14. (C) Governance is weak and there is little interaction between provincial and district governments. Provincial officials infrequently travel to the districts, citing security as a problem, although with PRT assistance, some trips are now happening. Governor Mawlawi Mohideen Baluch, a mullah

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and Karzai religious advisor who arrived in Farah January 31, has not been particularly impressive or effective. For the most part, he follows the PRT's lead rather than offering his own ideas and seems to have difficulty understanding issues, especially the Provincial Development Plan process. He meets regularly with PRT civilian elements. It is only due to PRT urging that he has begun to involve government officials in all levels of decision-making and governing. He now holds weekly meetings with the Provincial Council to improve its coordination with line directors and municipal and district officials. Despite all the problems, Governor Baluch told PRT that his number one priority is a guest house, which he places above the need for any district improvements, even water. While he also mentioned electricity, water, and roads for Farah City, he appears to ignore basic human needs in the districts. Baluch often travels to Kabul, staying two or three weeks each trip. He was one of the mullahs who recently traveled to Saudi Arabia at President Karzai's direction and has been selected to participate in the Afghan-Pakistan peace Jirga. There has been no Deputy Governor since July 2006. Farah City's mayor has no official status.

15. (C) There are few official district functionaries, leaving the districts largely ungoverned or led by self-appointed elders. Four of the district administrators are not legally in office (i.e., they were not appointed by the MOI, but rather by elders who do not have formal authority themselves), and police are transitory in the most insecure areas. Judges do not work in the districts and ministry representatives are rare. Delarom District, located on the Ring Road crossing between Helmand, Nimroz, and Farah at a point where numerous hijackings and authorized and unauthorized customs collections take place, was ceded from Nimroz to Farah by President Karzai, but the change awaits parliamentary approval. Until the change is official,

Delarom is not part of Farah's budget considerations.

ECONOMIC ISSUES

¶6. (SBU) There has been little economic development or job creation aside from a significant increase in poppy production and processing. When UNODC in August releases its poppy cultivation figures for 2007, we expect to see a record crop in Fara, and the province will likely become the fourth or fifth largest poppy-producing province in the country. Eradication efforts were sporadic and mostly unconfirmed. Although Farah is eligible for the alternative livelihood (AL) program, there have never been alternative livelihood funds available for Farah since AL funding has gone to the three priority areas. Heroin processing plants are reportedly located in Bakwa District, so finished product as well as raw poppy are now exported.

¶7. (SBU) Putting together a viable Provincial Development Plan (PDP) remains a challenge for the provincial leadership. The PRT civilian component is working with the Governor, PC, PDC, UN Habitat, UNICEF, and the only two NGOs in the province (ADA and CHA) to have them craft a comprehensive plan for presentation to the ANDS sub-national consultants when they visit Farah in August. Few in Farah understand the importance of such a plan, and several line directors have produced lists of their projects and called them plans. The concept of working together to determine goals and set priorities is new for many and not well understood. Among government officials, education levels are, for the most part, not high. The RRD line Director says he has "district plans" and the Economy Director has what he calls

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"sector plans". To meet the August deadline for a PDP, UN Habitat may simply merge these plans for Farah City. Farah is traditionally at the bottom of the list for receiving either donor or GOA resources or programs. Not having a viable plan will further hinder efforts to bring more resources to Farah.

RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT

¶8. (SBU) There are few reconstruction and development projects in Farah. The PRT and Civil Affairs team and USAID contribute most infrastructure projects. Over the last six months, CA projects included a bridge and connecting road, a road from Farah City to the airport, DCN buildings (awaiting completion to put in USAID-provided equipment), two basic health clinics, generators for the governor's compound and district centers, a women's sewing center, and various construction repairs. USAID is nominating several projects that target provincial-level capacity building and support services to targeted districts. Concentrating in insecure areas, USAID's focus is on access (road construction) and economic growth activities to reverse conflict-induced economic marginalization. Projects such as micro-finance opportunities to support nascent businesses and marketplace development grants are also under consideration.

¶9. (SBU) UNICEF works with health and education projects (i.e., vaccination programs, pre-natal and obstetric care and supplies, training health care workers, basic disaster relief, school kits for teachers and students, teacher and literacy training) and has plans to construct six schools, some wells and

latrines. UNICEF has also established groups for child protection, child abuse, and use of children as soldiers or for cheap labor.

FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

¶10. (C) The World Bank is funding a USD 35 million survey and design project for a potential Bakhshabad Dam in Farah's Bala Baluk district. Although Indian engineers left in March after several Taliban attacks, Afghan and Turkish contract engineers continue to work on-site even though security concerns continue. Both Iran and Pakistan are reportedly against the project and unconfirmed reports suggest they may have aided in the attacks against the Indians -- Pakistan because it does not want the Indians to be involved in projects in Afghanistan and Iran because a dam would cut off the current flow of water from the Farah Rud (river) into Iran and give Farah its own power source. No major donor has been identified to fund the dam.

¶11. (SBU) The deportee flow from Iran and the difficulties Afghans encounter trying to work in Iran add to already high unemployment numbers. It is estimated that up to 90 percent of Farah's men go to Iran, usually illegally, for work. While continuing to deport undocumented Afghan workers, Iran is reportedly moving forward with an assistance package, opening a new customs station at Mile 78, and planning a road from there to Farah City. Iranians are building a vocational training school that will be completed soon. There is an ongoing discussion about possible electricity grid connections and other infrastructure projects.

CULTURAL ISSUES

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¶12. (SBU) Social and cultural issues are static. Most district villages are primitive and lack basic infrastructure. Houses are mud hut adobe structures; temperatures in this bleak desert setting sometimes reach over 150 degrees Fahrenheit. Schools operate sporadically or not at all in several districts; few teachers are considered "trained and competent." The education line director is using a PRT-funded building meant for teacher training classes as offices for him and his staff. Women suffer from few economic opportunities and gender discrimination. Many women go out in Farah City with just head coverings as opposed to full burkas, but in villages, one rarely sees a woman outside. Taliban, criminals, and tribal rivals engage in kidnappings and beheadings which serve as messages to their adversaries.

WOOD